

REVOLUTION

socialist youth movement

French workers and youth back on the streets... **ISSUE 87**

Let's learn to
speak French!



tous ensemble! tous ensemble!



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a word from the editor

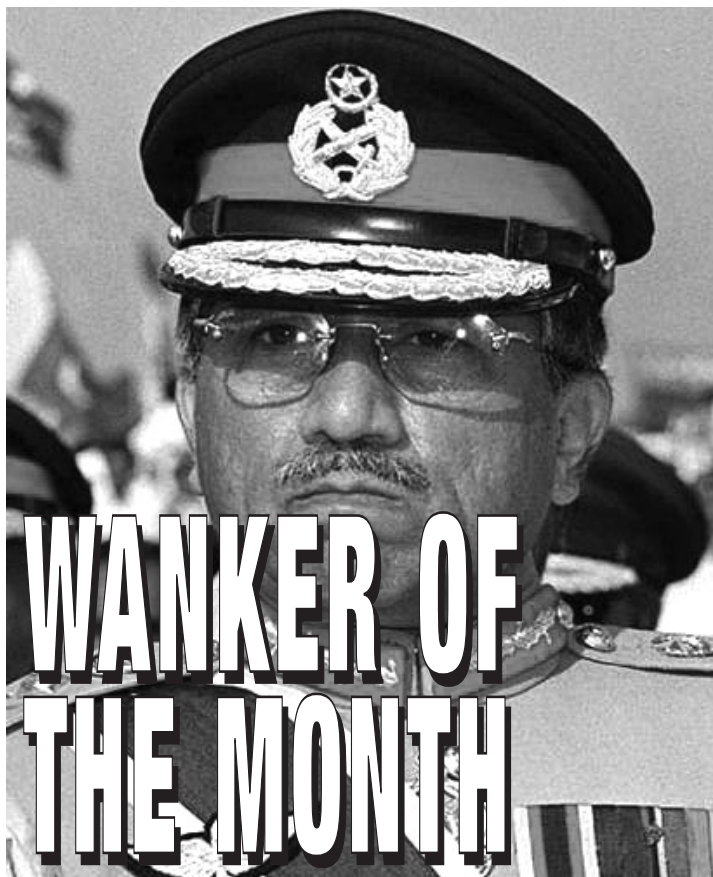
★ BY LUKE ★ LONDON ★

There is now near universal acceptance that the burning of fossil fuels, increasing the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, is the chief cause of rising global temperatures. It is very difficult to predict the effects of these rising temperatures, but they are likely to cause melting ice caps threatening regions and settlements below sea level; desertification and permafrost destroying arable land (possible famine); the poisoning of water supplies; and increasing number of freak weather conditions threatening people and infrastructure.

What is perhaps most terrifying about this impending climate crisis is the enormous gap between the scale of the problem, and the hopeless measures proposed by the world's governments to tackle it. Even the governments that have stuck with the Kyoto treaty - and the big polluters like United States and China stand outside it - look set to fail to meet the meagre reductions they promised for 2010. Unless action is taken quickly, the 21st century could be marked by an enormous ecological crisis.

The failure of our governments to respond reflects the simple contradiction that they manage a capitalist economy, where every human and ecological need falls a distant second place behind the imperative for a few to profit. We should reject outright the utopian idea that the market can be made "green", that "carbon trading" and "offsetting" can somehow negate the basic, destructive impulse of the profit system. We need to fight for reductions in fossil fuel emissions, and a planned move to renewable energy sources - and against the big oil barons et al who will go out of their way to stop this. We need to build a global environmental movement determined to force our leaders into action. But most of all, we must link the struggles of the working class, to the fight against pollution and in defence of the environment.

On December 8th in London thousands will join the annual climate change demonstration - this can be a great springboard to a mass movement. It follows the successful demonstrations against the expansion of Heathrow airport this summer that attracted thousands of radical young people. REVOLUTION will be organising a militant, revolutionary contingent on the demonstration. Get in touch to join us! Email info@worldrevolution.org.uk Call 07982 977 374



General Pervez Musharraf is the current president of Pakistan, and is this month's outright wanker. For a starter he has continuously supported the US and Britain's imperialist war on terror, receiving funds from the US for his military and defence after the outbreak of the war in Iraq.

He is a political puppet of the US and its regime in the Middle East and it is unquestionable that when the US say 'jump' he is all too willing to please them and do what they say.

On November 3 Musharraf felt he had no other option than to counter the mounting pressures of the labour movement by imposing a state of emergency. The real threat to the state is indeed the labour movement. He went as far as suspending the constitution, firing the chief justice of the Supreme Court and filling the streets with the police and the army. This was in response to the opposition of the illegality of Musharraf's re-election last month, and there was also growing opposition from sections of the workers in Pakistan, such as the lawyers and airline engineers. He felt threatened by the Supreme Court and the rising anger from Pakistan's citizens over the undemocratic regime, and turned to martial law, which gives people less democratic rights and the government the freedom to brutal violence against the resistance. Musharraf attacked any remaining fig leaf of democracy during the emergency, bringing in military rule to maintain his power. These are sure signs of a total wanker at his worst.

Although Musharraf is this month's wanker of choice, let's be honest! He has always been a wanker! When he came to power in a military coup d'etat in 1999, he claimed that the corruption in the government bureaucracy would be cleaned up. However, his regime has done little to quash corruption throughout his administration. So ultimately Musharraf is a corrupt, imperialist ally and a complete dictator. His regime is hanging on by a thread - one push and it will fall. If ever there was a wanker in need of immediate justice served by the working class it would be Musharraf - a first class tosser.

"THEY ARE BEATING US LIKE ANIMALS"

- A LAWYER AT LAHORE HIGH COURT



★ BY LUKE ★ EYEWITNESS IN LAHORE ★

On Saturday 3rd November, after a year of political strife, General Pervez Musharraf declared a state of emergency. On that afternoon the military moved to shut down all private television channels and began patrols on the streets of Islamabad. Military personnel occupied the Supreme Court and the Chief Justice, who had been the subject of mass protests this year when Musharraf suspended him from office, was told that his services were "no longer required". The terms of the state of emergency were clear. The constitution was to be suspended and all power passed into the hands of Musharraf. It gave a free reign to the military, police and government agencies to crush any opposition to their rule - martial law in all but name.

On the surface the streets of Lahore bustled just as they did in the days before this move. But under the surface a feeling of fear prevails. Talk to any Pakistani and the subject quickly moves onto the "emergency". For the country's political oppositionists the state of emergency has been keenly felt. Reports of the opposition parties and the lawyers' movement show a figure of 10,000 arrests, perhaps more.

In heroic scenes at the Lahore High Court 2,000 lawyers launched what was planned to be three days of action in protest at the state of emergency. As they took their protest from the High Court grounds out onto the streets, they unceremoniously ejected the undercover police officers that had swamped the courts that morning. Fighting broke out as the police stopped the march from leaving the court. Many lawyers were determined to fight and showered the police with stones. In the initial scenes one older man was so badly beaten by police that he collapsed unconscious with blood pouring from a head wound. Three hours of pitched battles ensued in what was a courageous stand. The better-armed police eventually cleared out the court house leaving only the bitter stench of tear gas.

At a superficial level the scenes were reminiscent of some of those at this year's G8 protests or any other conflict between progressive movements and the state - but it was in a context quite unlike anything I had ever experienced. Imagine the courage needed to confront a regime that, in a stroke, has abolished all rights and freedoms. There are many limits, inadequacies and outright contradictions in the liberal democratic state, but it does at least set some limits on the actions of state thugs against the people. The Pakistani state on Monday had no such restraints. The lawyers that confronted them knew this from the outset and this made the stand they took all the more courageous.

As they assembled again for the second planned day of protest, the police had already occupied the courthouse and they proceeded to arrest en masse the lawyers that had returned. In Lahore alone 1,000 lawyers have now been put behind bars. The legal system has been effectively shut down here, because Musharraf, with this 'second coup', aims to crush his opponents in the judiciary and the mass movement they have inspired. In March Musharraf suspended the Chief Justice Chaudhry on trumped up charges. The struggle around his suspension was organized at first by lawyers, but drew in many ordinary people and even Pakistan's slow moving and conservative opposition parties. At its high point in May, armed clashes took place between the movement and Musharraf supporters, and mass strike action crippled the whole country.

The Supreme Court reinstated the Chief Justice in July and at the time Musharraf accepted their verdict. However, this week the Supreme Court was due to rule on whether Musharraf's re-appointment for another five-year term, by bodies that were last elected in 2002 (and in rigged elections), was constitutional. It seems likely that Musharraf had it on good authority they would rule against him and then chose to make his move. In fact, all his

manoeuvres this year with the judiciary have been done with this aim in mind: to retain his personal power and that of the military.

The crisis in Pakistan runs much deeper, however, than a simple struggle for democracy. Musharraf himself, in his address to the nation, justified his move by pointing to the growing jihadist insurgency. Sure enough, the United States has pushed the Pakistani military into a bitter war in Balochistan, Swat and the North West Frontier Province. The state of emergency does not change the simple fact that the military cannot win this war. As one columnist put it, the United States has asked Musharraf to take on a million armed people in Balochistan in pursuit of maybe two thousand Al Qaeda operatives. While Musharraf has come under pressure from democratic forces, he has gone to great lengths to win political legitimacy at home and in the west for his modern, anti-extremist credentials.

In return for supporting Washington's so-called "war on terror" Pakistan has, since 2001, received millions of dollars in military aid from the United States. These come with all the typical neoliberal conditions. It is widely accepted that behind the superficially impressive growth rates there is an "economic crisis" based on rising inflation, unemployment and inequality. Corrupt generals and those with links to the military regime have benefited from corrupt privatisation. This stark economic reality is the backdrop to a steady flow of workers' struggles over the past eight years. Just last week workers in the national airline and hospitals downed tools, and textile workers staged protests. With this vicious clampdown on dissent, it would be easy to see Musharraf as a classic, third world strong man. In truth, however, he is very isolated, having lost the support of large sections of Pakistan's traditional ruling class, facing growing workers' struggles and losing a bitter war in the Afghan border regions.

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★ ONE WORLD ★ ONE BATTLE ★

REVOLUTION 3

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

But so far Pakistan's conservative and slow moving opposition parties have failed to rally support on the streets to bring Musharraf down. Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party and Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) have a tarnished record of endemic corruption and pro-Americanism.

Throughout this year the PPP have pursued negotiations with General Musharraf on a power-sharing deal. To deal-make with a tyrant has further alienated the PPP from much of its popular support. Musharraf may well call parliamentary elections and even remove his uniform, but without an oppositional judiciary, there is nothing stopping his supporters rigging the elections. If the PPP is at all sincere in its desire to rid Pakistan of this tyrant they have lit-

tle choice but to turn to the streets - but they may put up only token resistance, while naively hoping American pressure will do the rest.

The struggle in Pakistan goes far beyond resistance to one dictator. The economic crisis induced by neoliberal economic doctrine and the devastating effects of the "war on terror" will destabilise any government that does not fundamentally reverse these policies. The struggle for democratic change must go hand in hand with resistance on these fronts. If Pakistan is not to slip quickly into barbarism a revolutionary party must be built, and quickly. In the last years, events in Latin America have cre-



ated a new discussion on the need for socialist transformation. The real catastrophe facing Pakistan - and many states across the globe face similar instabilities - underlines the urgency of this goal.

REJECT RUBBISH DEAL!

★ BY RACHEL ★ NORWICH ★

Since July CWU members in the postal service across the country have been involved in a series of strikes (some official, some wildcat) against attacks from the Royal Mail. The Labour leadership may have changed faces, from Blair to Brown, but the attacks against the postal service and public workers in general continue apace. Its all about "efficiency savings" - the current buzzwords - that translates as job cuts and a pathetic pay offer, which does not meet the rising cost of living.

These were some of the attacks threatened by the semi-privatized Royal Mail bosses. Because the postal service is now competing with companies like TNT, Royal Mail are increasingly obsessed by 'profit' - strange since you would not exactly assume post to be a business venture, isn't it a public service? These attacks show how dangerous it is when public services go into private hands, which was just what the Blair government intended to happen (...and the Brown government is making happen).

The deal that Dave Ward and Billy Hayes, the top CWU bureaucrats, have cut with Royal Mail is rubbish - a sell out. With inflation running at 4 per cent this year and looking to increase next year, the pay deal offered is a complete rip-off. It offers a 6.9 per cent pay rise which is split into two parts, 5.4 per cent this year and 1.5 per cent next year. When the

postal workers rightly rejected the 2.5 per cent pay deal in May it was because they were not expecting a pay rise which, once inflation is taken into account, amounts to a pay cut.

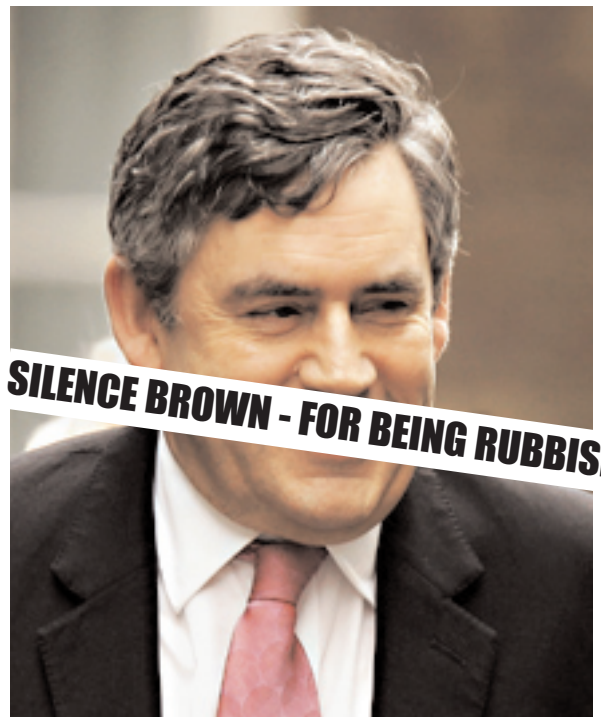
The changes to flexibility would mean that paid overtime would be a thing of the past - even though just one hour and a half a week is worth more in wages than the pay rise offered up by the Royal Mail. The massive issue for the postal workers throughout the strike action has always been the attacks on their pensions. Whilst pensions were in crisis anyway thanks to Brown's tenure as Chancellor of the Exchequer, postal workers were facing their own attacks. The deal from the CWU and Royal Mail would close the final salary pension scheme for a career average one, and it wants to raise the retirement age to 65. Any new workers would be on a different pension scheme to older postal workers - a divisive measure that would create an unjust two tier system that discriminates against the younger workers. As for working up until 65 - forget it! Being a postal worker is incredibly hard work and, with heavy bags, can lead to back injuries. Currently, the average working life is 35 years - 35 years of 4am starts, working Saturdays and carrying massive bags (usually full of junk mail that gets chucked the moment it goes through the letter box).

It is obvious that the deal is not good enough for the workers and simply proves that the

union bureaucracy is only interested in keeping its privileges and not in the workers' needs, such as a real living pay rise and secure pensions. It is no surprise of course, since the CWU is still tied to the Labour Party - the party which has done nothing but privatize and damage public sector services. When Brown cut the role of the unions in the Labour Party the national executive the CWU just agreed, making their role in the Labour Party even less meaningful. Why should a trade union be tied to the party that does nothing but attack it?

The CWU leadership are simply seduced by the expensive dinners and privileges that go with a job in the bureaucracy. The union members, the workers, should be building their own rank and file movement to defeat these attacks. Whilst the deal goes to ballot and militant workers urge their colleagues to vote "no" to it, it is time that the postal workers join forces with other public sector workers and call for joint action. As we saw in France this week, neo-liberal attacks are an everyday occurrence but joint action can cripple them. Union bureaucrats will always be useless but a rank and file workers' movement can make a real stand against attacks to their rights. It is crucial that this rank and file campaign actively for a "no" vote in the deal ballot. It is also the time to start organizing strike action amongst all public services and also to get young people and students involved.

BUILD A NEW WORKING CLASS PARTY!



SILENCE BROWN - FOR BEING RUBBISH

On the eve of the 1997 general elections, workers and youth around the country worried that the Tories were going to get into power again - that the years of privatisation and attacks on the unions would never end. Nurses ran a campaign called '24 hours to save the NHS' to rally support for the party that the British working class has traditionally voted for - the Labour Party.

Tony Blair won a landslide election but over the course of his 10 years in power has betrayed the hopes of the millions of voters who thought that electing the Labour Party would lead to a more equal society. Instead of preserving the welfare state - services like the NHS, state schools and state pensions that are funded through taxes so that services like healthcare aren't just for the rich - Blair has been privatising parts of the public sector that even the Tories dared not touch and Gordon Brown is now continuing his legacy.

Paying private companies to provide cleaning staff in hospitals has led to the outbreaks of the deadly virus MRSA as the overworked, underpaid and often under-trained cleaners have been forced to cut corners for the sake of their employers' profit. Labour has also introduced Academy schools, which mean that any nutter

with £2 million to put into the school can influence the curriculum. And now they're in the process of trying to give public sector workers - teachers, nurses, civil servants, postal workers - pay freeze at 2%, which in real terms is a pay cut, with inflation running at 4.8%.

But to cap it all, Blair attacked more countries than any other British Prime Minister - Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq to name a few. Over a million Iraqis have died in the invasion and occupation and now it looks like Brown could follow Bush into another war - an attack on Iran. Only 22% of the population voted Labour in the last election - the lowest electoral mandate of any post-war British government. Their vote has gone down every time but they keep getting elected because there's no one else to vote for. The Tories or Lib Dems would be just as bad and also rule in the interests of the bosses.

This is why we need a new political party - one that will fight in the interests of the workers and youth. One that will oppose the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and an attack on Iran. One that will fight the privatisation of our schools and hospitals and campaign for better wages and conditions. We need a party that will stop Labour from victimising youth with ASBOs and will fight for a higher minimum wage that will

apply to people of any age, not just those who are over 20. The BNP poses as the party that will fight back against the lack of council houses and hospital beds, but it blames these problems on asylum seekers. The fact is that it is Labour selling off our council housing and hospital beds and it is this - not asylum seekers - that is to blame. In order to defeat the BNP and their racist lies, we need to have our own party that can give workers and youth an alternative.

In order to do this, we need to persuade the trade union members to force their leaderships to break from Labour and work together to found a new workers party - the railway workers' and firefighters' unions are no longer affiliated to the Labour Party and we need to convince the other unions so follow suite. Revolution as socialists will argue for this party to take up a socialist programme - a programme that links our immediate struggles against privatisation and racism to the struggle for socialist revolution so that we can defeat these things once and for all. But this shouldn't be a condition on us joining and building the party, so long as we and everyone else are allowed the democratic right to argue for our ideas within it to persuade people, fight reformism and win workers to the revolutionary struggle for socialism.

AIDS CRISIS

★ BY JO★ LONDON ★

The 1st of December this year is world AIDS day - an opportunity to publicise the facts about the AIDS epidemic and mobilise for action to prevent the spread of AIDS. Currently 33.2 million people worldwide are living with HIV and 2.5 million of those are children under 15. In 2007 there have so far been 2.1 million HIV related deaths.

Sub-Saharan Africa suffers terribly from HIV and AIDS - it is a true pandemic effecting millions of people. Over the last year, AIDS has claimed the lives of 2 million people across the region and orphaned more than 12 million children. The AIDS epidemic threatens to cause massive destruction to these countries already gripped by poverty in the most part due to the misery of debt and economic policies imposed by the West. What little development has been achieved is now threatened. It can have very severe effects on a family has to stay at home to care for relatives. The effects of AIDS also weighs more heavily on women who often have to care for sick relatives, pushing them out of the workforce and back into the isolation of the home.

Many developing countries already pay out more to the Western world in debt than they spend on health and education. The AIDS epidemic is further stretching the under funded health services - not just because there are a rising number of patients to care for but also because a lot of hospital staff are affected. The case is the same in schools where many teaching staff have been lost to the disease causing a crisis in education. This is particularly damaging because otherwise sex education in schools could prove to be part of a strategy for AIDS prevention.

Prevention of the spread of AIDS in Africa is urgently needed. It does not have to be difficult - the provision and distribution of free condoms and comprehensive sex education could go a long way towards the prevention of HIV. However this is being held back by the policies of the big powers. George Bush's global gag policy states that the US will only give aid to projects who promote abstinence rather than the use of contraception. This outrageous policy, aside from being downright wrong, is totally ineffective in stopping the spread of AIDS. Sex is perfectly natural and should be a personal choice and

it is utopian to ban non-monogamous relationships. Also, in poverty stricken countries many women turn to prostitution to make ends meet.

The distribution of ARVs (the anti-AIDS drugs prescribed to those infected with HIV), is also held back by the capitalist system. The big pharmaceutical giants who develop the drugs aggressively defend the patent rights they own to these expensive drugs. And they cannot be effectively distributed across the many countries if their healthcare systems have been crippled by privatisation and debt. Under a socialist society free healthcare and treatment would be available to all - no longer a privilege for the few that could afford it.

It is important we do not see HIV as just a natural disaster and especially important that we do not see it as the fault of the African nations themselves. The destruction caused by HIV is a product of an imperialist system that keeps the majority of the world in spiralling poverty, all so a few at the top can profit, and dictate policy through the IMF, World Bank and aid with strings attached. Although World AIDS Day is effective in raising awareness about AIDS, simply buying a red ribbon is not the solution. Militant class struggle against the policies of the IMF, World Bank et al, fighting for a massive investment in healthcare, education and contraception distribution, funded by taxing the rich, is the road to take. We can link this struggle to a socialist world, based on need, not greed.

KAPOW*!?!*? HOON GETS A SLAP!

In November, Geoff Hoon came to the University of Leeds to give a talk to students. The former defence secretary's plans didn't exactly go smoothly...

Geoff Hoon was the Labour defence secretary at the time of the Iraq war - a war that has cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, affected millions more, and ripped the heart out of the country. He is also part of a Labour government which has consistently attacked our civil and workers' rights at home. He is a murderer, a warmonger and a hypocrite.

For all these reasons, Revolution and other anti-war activists protested at his talk. As Geoff Hoon was announced to speech, Revolution members dropped a banner saying, "Victory to the Iraqi Resistance!" followed by a speak declaring the atrocities which he is responsible for. From that the majority of the room began chanting "Get the troops out now!"

leaving Geoff Hoon bemused. Not even the organiser (using a PA system) could stop the chanting.

When he was finally able to give his (pretty boring) talk, it was followed by questions about the war in Iraq, the public sector pay dispute, and privatisation which he was forced to side-step around, and never fully able to answer. The anti-war activists were cheered for their questions, and Hoon was heckled for his inability to answer them. To top the whole event off, usually speakers at these events go for a meal with the organisers. He was so rattled and embarrassed by the events he just got in his car and left (probably went crying back to Gordon).

In the winter of 1916-1917 the people of Russia were suffering terribly. Having endured the brutal autocracy of Tsar Nicholas II for years, they had been granted a parliament - the State Duma - after a long period of struggle from 1905-1907. But this was a sham and the Tsar still retained almost all of his autocratic powers. And now, by late 1916, the Russian army had lost between 1.6 and 1.8 million soldiers, with an additional two million prisoners of war and one million missing out of the 14 million it had mobilized since 1914. The Russian front in the war was on the point of collapse. In the big industrial centres of Petrograd and Moscow people were starving.

The

2,000 factories and enterprises. By now they were shouting not only for bread but an end to the war and occasionally the overthrow of the autocracy. The workers marched towards the centre of Petrograd, finally coming to a halt at the wide Neva river. The bridges were blocked by Cossacks and soldiers. The workers, however, walked across the solidly frozen ice. The Cossacks and the soldiers did not move. The third day of the revolution proved decisive. Soon 70,000 soldiers had broken from their leadership and joined the revolution. The Tsar decided to return to the capital to restore order but his train was stopped at every turn by revolutionary rail

sional government or not. Lenin returned to Russia in April and immediately gave a speech stating that the revolution must be a workers' one, that European capitalism could collapse at any moment, and this could pave the way for international socialism. Revolutionaries could not support the provisional government, but had to fight for a workers government, based on the armed people - summed up in the slogan "All Power to the Soviets!"

The Soviet leadership at this time were still supporting the provisional government and did not raise a finger when troops loyal to the Provisional Government fired on workers and sailors opposing that government in Petrograd during the July Days. The Bolsheviks' headquarters were ransacked, party leaders arrested and Lenin forced into exile just across the border in Finland. In September, their was an



1917: WHEN WORKERS TOOK THE POWER!

★ BY RICHARD ★ LEEDS ★

revolution began on 21st February. The management at the Putilov iron works locked out a section of their workers, provoking a strike. The workers demonstrated and other factories came out in their support. Scuffles and protests also took place outside bakers' shops, when supplies ran out. The next day 22nd February was International Working Class Women's Day. Early in the morning thousands of women were on the streets, with the textile workers at the forefront. Well over 7,000 marched, chanting "Bread!" They marched through Petrograd's centres of heavy industry and their numbers began to swell as workers, men and women, from all over the city left their jobs to protest. By ten o'clock, 20,000 were marching. Before noon, numbers had reached more than 50,000.

The next day the demonstration grew even bigger - 214,000 workers from more than

workers. He was finally forced to make the decision to abdicate. His officials had long since fled. One of his last actions was to suspend the Duma - the capitalist representatives in it, rather than disobey and risk the Tsar's wrath, complied and pleaded for him to restore order i.e. fire on the workers!

After February the soviets were re-formed - these were democratic councils based on delegates from workplaces across each city. The soviets were an alternative centre of power to the provisional government but the leadership of them - Mensheviks, populists and intellectuals - led the soviet into the position of supporting the government, which was made up of bourgeois ministers intent on continuing the war.

At this point the position of the revolutionaries in the Bolshevik party was confused. They essentially also saw the revolution as a bourgeois one in which the working class could not introduce socialism but were split on whether to critically support the provi-

attempted coup by an old army general - Kornilov - during which the Kerensky government, with the Menshevik and SR ministers, were obliged to turn to the Bolsheviks in order to mobilise the workers of Petrograd against the coup. They had to agree to the arming of the workers' Red Guards, which the Bolsheviks had demanded.

Soon Bolshevik support increased inside the soviets, with every new election bringing more and more delegates to their side. First in Petrograd and then in other cities, it was soon clear they were well on the way to gaining a majority. Now, Lenin argued for using the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" once again, but this time as a call for an insurrection to get rid of the Provisional Government and replace it with one based on soviets with a Bolshevik majority. In October the Bolshevik led a successful insurrection that formed the world's first working class government. It was only possible thanks to the determined campaign of the Bolsheviks across 1917 to turn the democratic struggle into a struggle for a socialist revolution.

On November 20th 70,000 people demonstrated in Paris as part of a strike across the public sector that brought the country to a standstill. Workers were fighting a series of attacks on their pensions and pay by President Nicholas Sarkozy. Sarkozy is France's answer to Thatcher - with the same agenda of privatising and union-busting all in the name of "reform" and "modernisation". The ruling class in France have for years been trying to make their economy more competitive by attacking workers' gains. What makes Sarkozy more dangerous than all his predecessors is that he is open and upfront about his plans. So far he has threatened to attack the rights of the unions to strike and the 35 hour week, and to introduce regressive changes to the tax system. Now public sector pensions are threatened too.

One glance at his track record as Interior Minister shows what he may be capable of as president. His policies on immigration were appallingly racist. It is Sarkozy who is the main advocate of "immigration choisi" - a policy that would allow France to choose its own immigrants on the basis of employability, rather than the persecution and hardship refugees have suffered. During the riots in the banlieue (the French suburbs where immigrant communities live in poor housing with high unemployment rates and are subject to everyday police repression) in 2005, Sarkozy referred to the French youth as "scum" and said that the banlieue needed to be washed out with bleach. He also ordered the intense police repression including a policy to deport all those arrested during the rioting, even if they were second generation immigrants.



If that were not enough, Sarkozy was also a staunch supporter of the CPE: a piece of employment legislation proposed in 2006 which would have allowed bosses to fire workers under 26 without notice or justification in their six months. The government had to withdraw this legislation and was almost brought to its knees when the movement against the CPE brought 3 million onto the streets of France, universities and colleges were occupied and workers came out on strike.

If this track record tells us anything it is that Sarkozy will not abandon the road of neo-liberal reform unless forced to by the power of the working class and youth.

The fight back

This November the French workers and youth have shown their power and their potential to stop Sarkozy in his tracks. In the run up to the massive demonstrations of November 20th striking train drivers crippled the transport system, in defence of their pension rights. They were witch-hunted by the press and government, but remained defiant and could count on the support of

the huge numbers of workers and youth who hate Sarkozy with a passion.

In an attempt to demobilise the movement, Sarkozy has tried to divide public sector workers from those in the private sector - who have worse pensions and retire later. Our response to this malicious game should be unequivocal: if Sarkozy is worried about equality of pensions across the workforce then improve them in the private sector rather than worsen them in the public sector. Who should pay? The rich of course!

There have been solidarity demonstrations by youth and students who are also opposing reforms that would see the beginning of the private sector take over of university education. Students at 43 of France's 80 universities went on strike and occupied 28 of them. The majority of the occupations have now been brutally dispersed by the police. Student solidarity action is a vital ingredient if the struggle is to succeed. Despite this, the leader of the CGT (one of France's major unions) has condemned the student action and stressed that the strike is not a political one. This is ridiculous - of course the strike is political! And

if it is to win it must challenge the whole Sarkozy agenda and mobilise all those affected by it. Strength is in unity and to create successful opposition all workers must be mobilised whether public or private sector, young or old, black or white.

Grève general!

It is clear from the union leaders' attempt to narrow not widen the movement and their readiness to dive into negotiations with Sarkozy that if left to their own devices they will not give the leadership needed for the working class to win. The French working class is already organising itself on a rank and file level in strike committees and inter-professional meetings. These co-ordinations are vital to put pressure on the trade union leaders to organise effective action and to organise it without them if necessary!

So, what action must the French workers take? Well, with strikes already across the public sector and no change in policy from Sarkozy, a general strike - grève general -

is now a realistic goal. This would not only stop these reforms in their tracks, but can also bring the whole Sarkozy government to its knees. A victory of the French working class would also give confidence to their brothers and sisters across Europe that are fighting similar attacks to take militant action. The current attacks on the working class show the capitalist system's failure to provide for the majority of people and afford rights to the working class.

The attacks across Europe are against

gains which were made through working class struggle in the post-war period and are now being eroded away again in an attempt to build a more "flexible" workforce and open up public services to the market - that is to make more profit for the bosses at the expense of the workers. These "neo-liberal" counter reforms must be fought against tooth and nail. But until we overthrow capitalism to build a socialist society we will continue to face the same fights time and time again as profit takes priority over people.



brits abroad...!

In solidarity with the striking workers and youth, some REVOLUTION members from Britain headed over to the continent to join the demonstration. We also helped comrades of the League for the Fifth International distribute literature and intervene into the strike.

We arrived in Paris to find the Metro paralysed by strike action. The right wing headlines spoke of "selfish" strikers and commuter chaos but we were there to give an altogether different message - solidarity! The demonstration on the 20th of November was huge and the train drivers were visible throughout the demonstration firing up red flares. Chants of "Tous ensemble!" filled the air. This demonstration sent a powerful message to Sarkozy: the French workers will not take his attacks lying down!

After the demonstration we made our way

across Paris (with some difficulty due to the strike!) to an assemblée générale (mass meetings) comprised of mainly teachers, although there were also some rail workers there, from the union SUD. SUD is the most radical union in France and represents workers from a number of sectors.

In France, although the union leaders call the strikes, these assemblée générale (AG) run them at the base. Paradoxically, union density in France is extremely low - around 10 per cent - and even then members are fragmented among several rival unions. To overcome this, strikers organise workplace meetings, open to members of all unions and of none. It is at the AG each morning that workers democratically discuss the strike and the tasks of the day. Most importantly, they vote on whether to continue the strike.

The AG will also elect a strike committee and

mandate it to produce leaflets, organise pickets, convene the following day's AG and send delegates to other local workplace or student meetings and to AGs interprofessionnelles (cross-sector meetings, or action committees). It was to just this kind of inter-professional co-ordination meeting that we were heading. The workers' movement in Britain clearly has a lot to learn from this high level of self-organisation amongst the workers.

At the meeting we attended the morale was high and the workers radical. Many were calling for an immediate general strike of all workers to defeat the government attacks! As internationalists it is important that we intervene into workers' struggle outside our national borders. In France there are plenty of lessons we can learn their movement from rank and file organisation to the central role of radical youth.

STOP ISRAEL STRANGLING GAZA!

★BY NAT ★ LONDON ★

In the Gaza strip of Palestine there is a humanitarian disaster. 87% of its 1.5 million population now live below the poverty line. Since June this year Israel has imposed a total blockade on Gaza, closing down Karni, the only point of access for Palestinian exports from the Gaza Strip and the major point for import of goods. The Fatah government that took control of the West Bank in June claims that re-opening Karni is a priority, but have done very little to make this a reality. The lack of imports has meant a huge increase in the price of basic staple foods - for example, the price of flour has gone up by 80%. There is a terrible shortage of medicine, particularly anaesthetic drugs, and the lack of cement has meant that essential building works such as repairs to the sewerage system have ground to a halt.

On top of all this, in October the Israeli defence minister Ehud Barak decided to cut off power supplies to Gaza. Besides complete darkness this would mean that what little food Gaza residents have will rot, and it will prevent hospital operations from going ahead. Israeli human rights groups brought a case on this to Attorney General, who is now mulling over whether such a power cut is legal. Since he recently gave the green light to plans to cut off the supply of diesel, which is needed for what little industry still exists and to run ambulances, his decision is pretty

unlikely to be favourable. In any case, the rest of the blockade remains and shows no sign of stopping.

Cutting off a route for exports from Gaza is equally damaging - the loss of value for goods from Gaza is estimated to be approx. US\$ 500,000 a day. Farmers that previously sold their goods in Israel and beyond now have to sell at a huge loss in an impoverished local market. This has decimated industry and led to tens of thousands of workers being laid off, so that unemployment now stands at 85%. Much of the population are forced to survive on UN food coupons.

Israel's justification for keeping the routes closed is that Palestinians from the Gaza strip continue to fire Quassams (rockets) into Israel. Israel, as they always do, pose as the victim when in fact they fire hundreds of tank shells into Gaza and carry out mass assassination operations. Both the Israeli shell attacks and the continued blockade are a way of inflicting collective punishment on the entire population of the Gaza strip. This is part of the daily war that Israel continues to wage against the Palestinian people.

The blockades continue because Israel and the Western imperialists have a clear agenda of forcing the Hamas government out. We should never forget that Hamas won a democratic election across the whole of the occu-

pied territories. Since then the imperialists and Israel have supported Hamas' rival Fatah in effectively launching a coup against Hamas, by seizing control of the west bank. The west justify opposing a democratically elected government on the basis that Hamas do not recognise Israel's right to exist and refuse to renounce violence.

But Hamas are absolutely right to refuse to recognise a state that was founded on the basis of ethnic cleansing of an entire population. We must absolutely defend the right of the Palestinians to armed resistance against Israeli oppression. We don't have to support the Islamic politics of Hamas or their resorting to counter-productive terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians to defend their basic right to resist - and the basic right of the Palestinians to elect their own government.

The Palestinian struggle is a central part of the worldwide struggle against imperialism, because Israel acts as a watchdog for US imperialist interests in the Middle East. This means it is essential to take action now to prevent Israel and the imperialists from crushing resistance in Gaza and imposing its hopeless "two-state" solution. We must launch an international campaign to defy the blockade, coupled with a mass campaign to put pressure on US and European governments to abandon their support for it. Trade unions and other progressive organisations across the world should raise funds to send medicines, foodstuffs and fuels to Palestine. These would need to be delivered with the clear message that we - the international working class in solidarity with the oppressed people of the world - represent the real international community, and demand free passage into the Gaza strip. International observers should be sent to monitor the actions of Israel and Fatah in response. We also need to isolate Israel by extending the growing boycott of Israeli products and institutions through workers' actions and mass civil disobedience.

Lobby of parliament organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign - 7pm, Wednesday 28th November in Parliament Committee Room 10, House of Commons



REVOLUTION 10

★ ONE WORLD ★ ONE BATTLE ★

HANDS OFF IRAN!

★ BY JOHN ★ LEEDS

As the price of a barrel of crude oil reaches the astronomical figure of \$100, a value not seen so high since the first Gulf War, the US and UK are becoming increasingly desperate to get their greasy mitts on more energy. The recent and continuing rises of the price of a barrel have seen protests, strikes and civil disorder all the way round the world from Senegal most recently, to Morocco where 50 people were injured, to Mauritania where the price of flour has risen by 100% due to the costs of transporting and processing grain. Protests have also been seen in Mexico, and in West Bengal, where the Indian army has had to be sent in to fight growing resistance of the people against their poverty.

The rising cost of fuel is of course having a knock on effect on the US economy, a country so heavily reliant on oil and a country which is also a massive exporter of food right across the world. The greatest reason for the rising cost of oil is down to the complete failings of the US and UK's War on Terror. These imperialists are steadily getting beaten back in Iraq, with UK troops having to retreat from Basra in the south whilst in the north the Iraqi people have continued to fight back ferociously and bravely against occupation. At home, some

American politicians have already decided the war cannot be won, attempting to reject more funding for Bush's war chest. Even the 'winnable' war, the one in Afghanistan, now seven years old is being lost, with former Lib Dem MP Paddy Ashdown stating a loss as a likelihood. NATO have been forced to suggest doubling the number of troops in the country as the ever growing Taleban have taken Western areas near to the Iranian border back off the coalition. It seems that taking troops from Iraq and putting them in Afghanistan is no certain strategy to cut coalition losses.

In addition, Pakistan, a key ally of the war mongers, has suffered heavy losses fighting militants in its Northern regions with over 200 soldiers recently captured. Morale in the military is at an all-time low and the population has never been more against the Musharraf dictatorship. This opposition led to Musharraf calling a state of emergency on November 3rd. Forced into a corner by the people of his own country, Musharraf relied on his power base as a military general and sent in the police and army to arrest the opposition, shut down the media and regain control through fear and brutality. The events in Pakistan are

embarrassing for the US which is exposed yet again as the ultimate hypocrite for funding some dictatorships whilst threatening others.

So whilst oil prices are reaching catastrophic levels and the War on Terror is in deep crisis, to make matters worse Venezuela and Iran refuse to pay ball and are enjoying the power brought to them by their own increased wealth from oil profits. Venezuela is increasingly nationalising its oil industry and making life difficult for US oil companies like Exxon Mobil to operate in the country. The Iranian President continues to speak out against the War on Terror openly, and with more confidence. The US and UK blame the regime for funding Shia resistance movements in Iraq and Afghanistan. Venezuela and Iran have threatened to lead a challenge among oil producing countries to use oil production as a political stick with which to beat US imperialism.

Backed into a corner it seems that the US and it's allies might be prepared for a new escalation of the war on terror - an attack against Iran. It is time to organise against this war now before it really starts - down with the War on Terror and Hands Off Iran!

CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE...

How can a doctor be fighting to keeping a premature baby alive then terminating a pregnancy at the same stage? But the dilemma is very easily solved if you look at it not starting from the unborn baby but from the woman. If you want your pregnancy to end in birth then you have every right for doctors to keep that baby alive using whatever technology available. On the other hand, if a woman wants to terminate her pregnancy, at whatever stage, she has just as much right to do so.

The argument against aborting a foetus because it is "potential life" is the one used by religious and pro-life groups and one supported by the media to pull on emotions and feelings. A foetus is not a life. It has no rights and is totally dependant on the woman's body. The recent development of 4D ultrasounds has meant you can see an image of the foetus inside the womb that looks more like a "real baby". In the Daily Mail they've shown a foetus sucking its thumb! But it is not being able

to suck your that make you a person! What makes a person is the way we interact socially and our experiences. As Marx long ago said this "being" determines consciousness, so how can an unborn baby have a consciousness?

Women need the right to choose the fate of our own bodies. Whether you would personally have an abortion or not is up to you - but it can never be right to deny other women the right to have one. The harsh reality of capitalism is that the burden of childcare tends to fall on women. There is a big practical element to abortion for many women. With a total lack of socialised childcare, women are forced to either give up their jobs completely or work part time for low wages. That is, of course, apart from the very thin layer of lucky, upper and middle class women who can afford expensive childcare. On average three women a day register claims against unfair dismissal related to pregnancy. Attacks on abortion will

disproportionably affect working class women who can't afford a private abortion or to give up their jobs to support an unwanted child.

Most late abortions are for young women who have been too ashamed to tell their families about the pregnancy due to the stigmatization of young people's (especially young women's) sexuality. Reducing the upper time limits for abortion will hit the some of the most vulnerable people in our society: young, working class women. Reforms brought in 40 years ago have been developments along the road to women's liberation. But they are not enough. We must not just fight against the proposed cuts but against the current restricted abortion rights too; for free abortion on demand, as early as possible but as late as necessary. We must fight for comprehensive sex education, free and easy access to contraception and the morning after pill. Only when we have total control of our own bodies can women be liberated.

★ ONE WORLD ★ ONE BATTLE ★

REVOLUTION 11

WE HAVE A RIGHT TO ABORTION

★ BY JO ★ LONDON ★

Before 1967 35,000 women were hospitalised each year as a result of backstreet abortions. It was in 1967 that the law was introduced to legalise abortion. It revolutionised the lives of hundreds of thousands of women who could now control their own fertility instead of having to turn to dangerous, illegal operations. The right to free abortion on demand is one that women have fought for and these reforms brought us closer to. But now, due to moral hysteria and distorted statistics, the Church and right wing politicians are attempting to roll back the clock. So are we going to sit back while politicians, the state and the Church use our bodies as an election issue? We cannot afford to have abortion rights cut any further. The upper limit has already been reduced once. In 1990, it was lowered from 28 weeks down to 24. One in three women will have an abortion in their lifetime yet still they are ridiculously underfunded with a quarter of women having to pay to get the operation privately. And for

those who can't afford it, it is a postcode lottery to get an abortion on the NHS. It's a sad fact that the medical community tends to be against abortion. As if an abortion isn't a traumatic experience enough, you have to justify your decision. The baby must pose a "serious threat to your mental or physical health" and this must be approved by two doctors. On top of this doctors can refuse to give permission to a woman for an abortion "on moral grounds". Medical students can abstain from abortion training also on these so-called "moral grounds". So the choice is removed from the woman and given to the doctor. It is a gift or privilege (not a right) conferred by the doctor.

Medical technology has played a major part in the argument against abortion, making it possible to keep premature babies alive at younger ages. This apparently poses a dilemma.

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WHAT WE STAND FOR

The Independent on Sunday got it right in an "expose" of REVOLUTIONs involvement in organising May Day 2001. It said: "REVOLUTION wants to build a revolutionary socialist mass movement and overthrow capitalism." Exactly right. We are opposed to capitalism and the misery, alienation, war and environmental destruction it creates.

We fight all forms of discrimination and oppression, whether on grounds of sex, race, nationality or sexuality.

Capitalism is a global system, so we have to fight it globally. We want to smash the borders and divisions of nations and move forward to a truly global and united humanity, without bigotry, war and class division. We stand shoulder to shoulder with our sisters and brothers in the Third World struggling to break free of the trillion dollar debt, the IMF, WTO and NATO.

We are socialists - we want to abolish capitalism and replace it with a planned economy. But we do not believe that the capitalist elite will allow their wealth and privilege to be voted out of existence. We believe it will take force to take the power and property away from the few and redistribute into the hands of the many - that means a revolution!

REVO wants young people to participate in radical politics and organise themselves. Young people can be very radical and militant, the anti war movement proved that. They should take a lead in the movement that will shape the struggle for the future.

We believe a mass movement must be built based on the support of the majority of the people - the working class. It is the working class that produces all the wealth in this society. The working class has no interest in keeping capitalism going. Only the working class has the power, the size and the traditions of organisation to bring this rotten system crashing down.

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